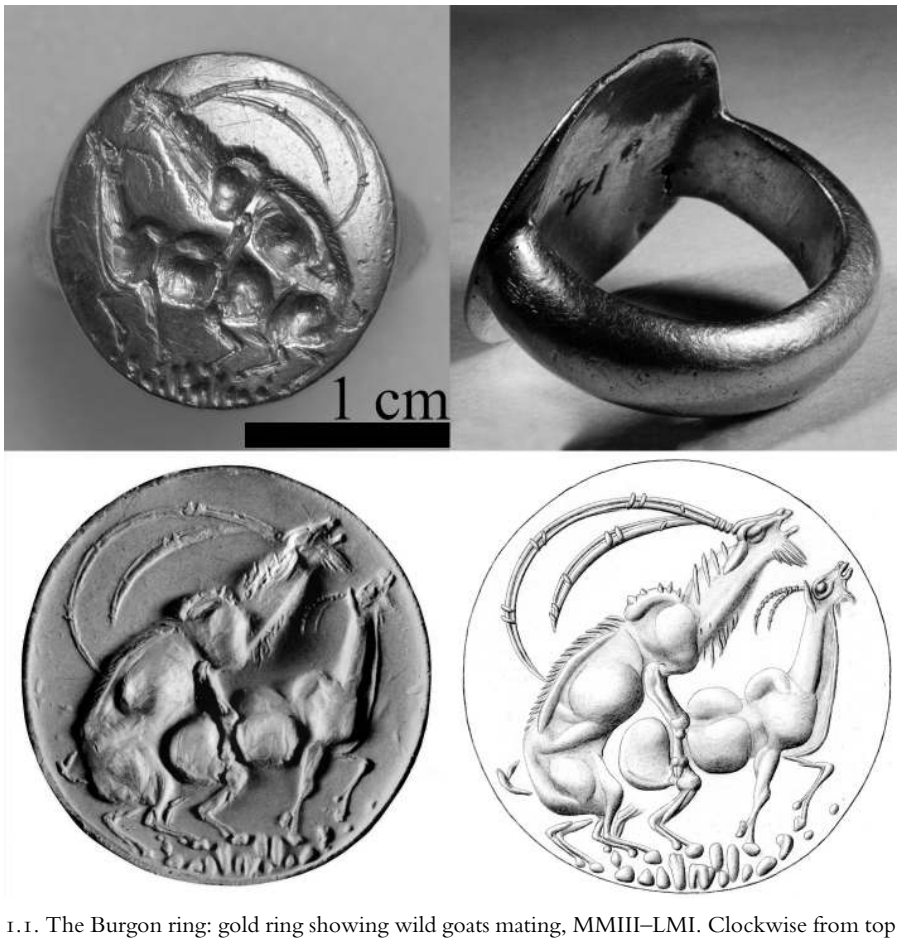
ONE

INTRODUCTION

> The meal furnished by the hospitality of my Samarióte guide consisted chiefly of the flesh of a wild-goat, killed by him on an expedition from which he had only just returned. I obtained from him three pairs of the animal's horns.
>
> (Pashley 1837b: 271)

The 'Burgon ring' shows two agrimia, as the wild goats of Crete are also known, wide-mouthed and vigorously mating. The finely engraved detail on the circular bezel, only 1.6 cm in diameter, clearly delineates the male agrimi's bristly coat, beard and his long, curved, knobbly horns arching over his back (Figure 1.1). Beneath him, her head raised, stands a female goat, her ridged horns shorter. Their hooves merge into a rock formation below. This gold ring was part of a much larger collection accumulated by Thomas Burgon while he was a merchant in the Aegean from 1809 to 1814. He proved unable to make a living, perhaps because of his taste for antiquities, and joined the British Museum, to which he also sold his collection in 1842. The ring is described rather laconically in a subsequent British Museum catalogue as 'two wild goats; beneath them, rocks are indicated' and assigned to the Mycenaean period (Marshall 1907: 4). It was claimed for the Cretan Bronze Age by Sir Arthur Evans, who illustrated it in his seminal work *The Palace of Minos at Knossos*, where he described the scene as two agrimia 'in the act of coition' (Evans 1935: 510). The ring has been absorbed into the modern entity known as Minoan Crete, assembled from archaeological excavations and museum collections. This book aims to retrace the place of such animal depictions among the collective of animals, humans and things of which they were once part.



1.1. The Burgon ring: gold ring showing wild goats mating, MMIII–LMI. Clockwise from top left: photograph of bezel (GR 1842,0728.127). © The Trustees of the British Museum; photograph of hoop, drawing of impression, photograph of impression (CMS VII 68). © CMS Heidelberg

Three pairs of agrimi horns obtained on Crete in 1834 by Robert Pashley, a Cambridge academic, were similarly absorbed into a modern understanding of Cretan fauna which would have differed from that of the Samariote hunter he bought them from. On his return to Cambridge, Pashley's horns were transformed from hunting trophies to scientific specimens when his Cambridge colleague, Mr Rothman, identified them as belonging to the species *Capra aegagrus*. As Rothman noted:

> it is not the bouquetin, to which however it bears considerable resemblance, but the real wild-goat, the capra aegagrus. Pallas. the supposed origin of all our domestic varieties. The horns present an anterior trenchant edge, characteristic of this species. The discovery of the aegragus in

> Crete is perhaps a fact of some zoological interest, as it is the first well-authenticated European locality of this animal. (Pashley 1837b: 271)

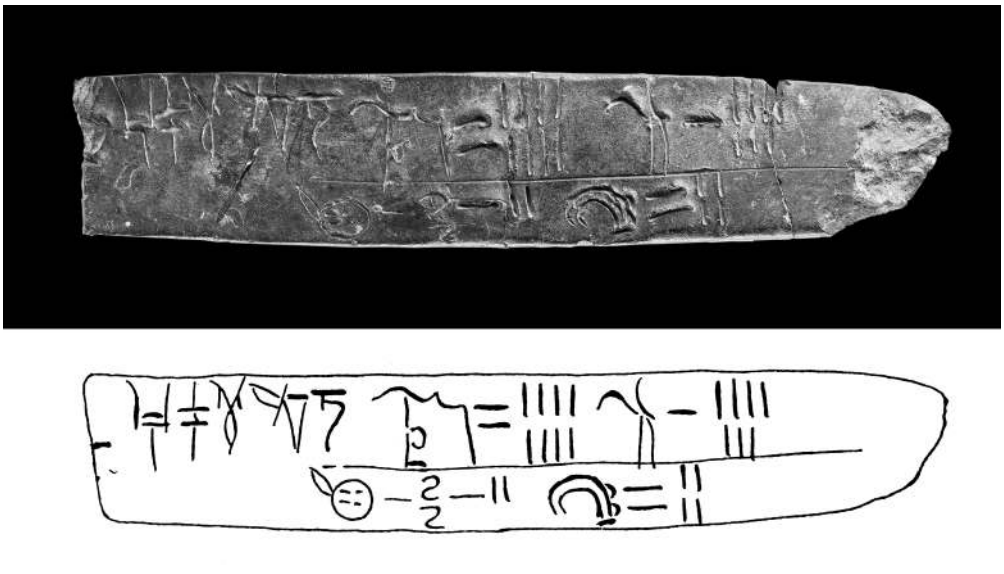
The sixteenth-century French naturalist Pierre Belon had visited Crete, recorded his observations of the Cretan wild goats and also obtained horns (Belon 1555: 14). He called them boucestein, using the same name as the wild goat he would have known from the French Alps, now more commonly called the bouquetin or ibex (*Capra ibex*). It was this identification which Rothman was challenging, although the credit of naming the species of the Cretan wild goat went to another zoologist. Heinrich Schinz, relying largely on Belon's account, distinguished the Cretan wild goat from other worldwide species of wild goats, labelling it *Capra cretica* (Schinz 1838: 10).[1] Although his identification was accepted, until recently the Cretan wild goat was classified as *Capra aegagrus cretica* (Schinz 1838), a wild goat subspecies.

The classification of the Burgon ring also relied on the assembly of specimens against which it could be compared, which were assembled into a broader cultural group. It was only with the excavation of the Mycenae Shaft Graves on the Greek mainland in 1876 that rings of a similar type were found in an archaeological context, hinting that the Burgon ring might belong to the newly identified Bronze Age of Greece. By 1900 there were enough similar depictions on rings and sealstones for the German art historian Adolf Furtwängler to publish its impression alongside other examples of 'Mycenaean' pictures of animals. Here the 'truth to nature' of the goats' movements and expressions was praised (Furtwängler 1900: 14, pl. 3). In the same year, Arthur Evans began his excavations at Knossos in Crete, at first using the name 'Mycenaean' to describe his Bronze Age finds, but he increasingly adopted the term 'Minoan' to contrast them with the culture of the mainland. He published the Burgon ring alongside other animal depictions which he attributed to the 'finest' Middle Minoan III style (Evans 1935: 510). For Evans this period was distinguished by a 'naturalistic spirit' in art, exemplified by the Burgon ring, with its finely detailed depiction of animal bodies. This view still holds, and it has recently been described by one authority as 'an outstanding example of Minoan naturalism' (Krzyszkowska 2005: 128).

Among the finds from the first season at Knossos were fired-clay lumps with seal[2] impressions on them, many showing animals. Evans (1900: 69) identified these sealings as 'a class of object never before observed in any excavation of a Mycenaean site'. These were sometimes found alongside clay tablets inscribed with written records, some in a 'hieroglyphic' script and others in a 'linear' script (Evans 1900: 29, 56). This proved that objects like the Burgon ring were used for making sealings, used as a material trace of transactions, some of which were also recorded on clay tablets. One group of tablets inscribed with the script which Evans later called 'Linear B' was found in a building known as the

'Armoury' at Knossos, excavated in 1904. Evans was unable to decipher Linear B but could recognise a pictorial sign recording wild goats' 'long curving horns with the characteristic protuberances' (Evans 1935: 832) (Figure 1.2). He recalled the bow of Pandarus in the *Iliad*, made from the huge horns of a goat that the hero had himself hunted, and suggested that these horns had been brought by 'individuals who had succeeded in obtaining the horns by their own prowess' to be made into bows (Evans 1935: 835). With the decipherment of Linear B it is now apparent that the horns recorded on this tablet were collected as taxation from the area of Rethymnon, to the west of Knossos. This shows that the first records of agrimi horns were made not by zoologists but by Bronze Age administrators. Long before they were transformed into scientific objects, agrimi horns were being turned into weapons.

It was still possible to hunt agrimia on Crete when Evans was excavating at Knossos in the early twentieth century, although the introduction of modern weapons had started to affect their numbers: 'In Crete it is now mainly confined to the White Mountains, though it is still found occasionally on Ida and, more frequently, on the Lasithi ranges East of Knossos' (Evans 1935: 833). The food shortages resulting from subsequent conflicts, notably the Second World War, led to an increase in hunting and there were perhaps fewer than 100 agrimia remaining on the island following this period (Farmar 1952). Numbers have since recovered, but the island's wild goats are now only found in the White Mountains of western Crete. They are largely confined to the Samaria Gorge National Park, founded in 1962, now a popular tourist trail and UNESCO



1.2. Linear B tablet showing agrimi horns, LMIIIA. Length: 13.2 cm. Above: photograph (AN1910.217). © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford. Below: drawing (after Evans 1935: fig. 813d)

Biosphere Reserve. Hunting agrimia on the island is now illegal and as a result the practice, which has defined relations between humans and agrimia for millennia, has all but come to an end.

At the same time, debates over identification have continued as a result of recent morphological and genetic analysis showing that agrimia are likely to be descendants of domestic goats which became feral soon after they were brought to Crete by humans during the Neolithic (Shackleton 1997; Bar-Gal et al. 2002; Horwitz and Bar-Gal 2006). As a result they do not appear on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species because they are classed there as domestic goats (*Capra hircus*) and not 'true' wild goats (*Capra aegagrus*) (Weinberg and Ambarli 2020). Nevertheless, attempts continue to save them not just from hunters but from contact with domestic goats because of fears about hybridisation (Spanos et al. 2008). Now often referred to as kri-kri, they have become a symbol of Crete, rarely seen in real life, but widely visible as tourist souvenirs.[3]

Pashley's agrimi horns and Burgon's gold ring have become distanced from the human-animal relations of which they were once a part. They instead became part of a modern way of understanding the world as they entered institutions such as the University of Cambridge or the British Museum and were published in accounts of travels and scholarly catalogues. The digitisation of these books, and of museum collections, has now made them instantly accessible from anywhere in the world. The horns, originally the product of a hunt, when brought to England became part of the description of the natural world of Crete, involving the collecting and listing of specimens. The gold ring has been recognised as a masterpiece of Minoan culture, expressing an appreciation of the natural world. Yet this natural world and the Minoan culture that appreciated it are products of a modern understanding of Crete. This book instead seeks to reintegrate agrimi horns and agrimi depictions into the relations between humans, animals and objects using the concepts of animal practices and animal things. Animal practices are context-specific relations between humans and animals, of which animal things are the material trace. Such animal things can endure long after the animal practice of which they were once part has disappeared and can be co-opted into new sets of relations. Now part of a display about Minoan Crete in the British Museum, the Burgon ring was once an animal thing which, at the moment it was used to make an impression in clay, created a set of material links between its user, the palace and the animals which inhabited the mountains beyond the settlements of Bronze Age Crete. This book will explore a variety of animal things from Bronze Age Crete and the animal practices that produced them. But first it is necessary to trace the development of the increasingly fragile concepts of Minoan culture and Cretan nature.

MINOAN CULTURE

Like other travellers before him, Robert Pashley paid a visit to the site of Knossos and observed 'the few shapeless heaps of masonry, which alone recal to the remembrance of the passing traveller its ancient and bygone splendour' (Pashley 1837a: 209). Finds there of Greek coins with the design of a labyrinth had shown that this was the location of the Greek and Roman city of Knossos and the mythical home of the Minotaur. Excavations began at the site in 1878, instigated by a local antiquarian named Minos Kalokairinos (Kopaka 1995, 2015). His discovery of a number of large storage jars in stone-built magazines attracted attention and he was soon asked to stop by his peers, who were concerned that finds from the site might be claimed by the Ottoman authorities. This was the decade in which Heinrich Schliemann had made spectacular finds at two other sites famous in Greek myth, Troy and Mycenae, and he made an unsuccessful bid to buy land at Knossos in order to dig there next (Schliemann 1878, 1880). Following his excavation at Mycenae, 'Mycenaean' was soon used as an adjective to describe a type of early pottery and associated finds from a number of sites across the Aegean, and rapidly became the name of a prehistoric mainland culture (Furtwängler and Loeschcke 1886). It was widely anticipated that Crete too would produce such material once the island gained its independence.

These nineteenth-century finds and publications helped structure what Arthur Evans found at Knossos and the way he interpreted his finds. Evans first came to Crete in 1894 in search of an early form of writing which he had recognised on sealstones said to come from the island (Evans 1894, 1897). He too visited Knossos, saw Kalokairinos's excavations and succeeded in buying a share of the land on which the site was located. He was particularly interested in the building Kalokairinos had discovered because some of its stone blocks were incised with what appeared to be written signs. The political situation precluded excavation but Evans was able to travel around Crete, observing ancient remains and purchasing sealstones with further evidence for the script he was looking for (Brown 2001). He rapidly published his discoveries in a paper on the 'Prae-Phoenician Script' of Crete, in which he used the term 'Minoan' Crete as a counterpart to Mycenaean Greece (Evans 1894: 367).[4] He regarded some of the seals as earlier than Schliemann's finds from Mycenae, noting that: 'We see before us the prototypes of more than one of the characteristic forms of Mycenaean times' (Evans 1894: 372). Even before Evans had excavated at Knossos, he was already trying to establish Minoan Crete as distinct from, and antecedent to, the Mycenaean culture of the mainland.

Arthur Evans began his excavations at Knossos in 1900, by which time Crete was effectively independent from the Ottoman Empire. The local authorities,

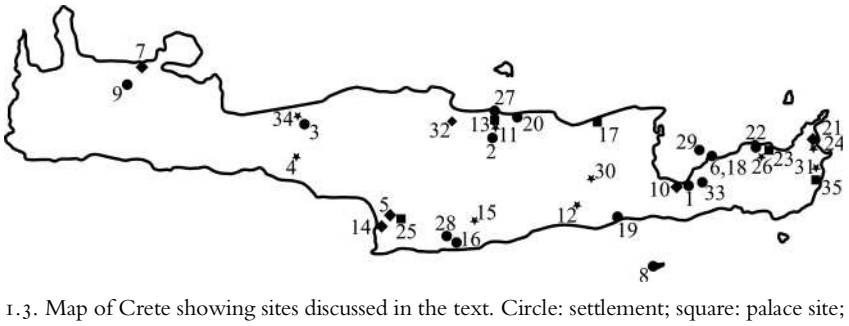
particularly the Heraklion Syllogos led by Joseph Hazzidakis, were favourable to his purchase of the rest of the land around Knossos with a view to excavation (MacGillivray 2000b: 164–6; Brown 2001: xxiii). Almost immediately, Evans started to find the clay tablets which demonstrated the use of an early writing system at the site. He also rapidly came down on a room with a stone seat still *in situ* against walls painted with frescoes. In his report of the first year's excavations Evans named this the 'Throne-Room' and the large building he had uncovered was called a palace. Although he toyed with the idea of a matriarchy, he argued that a king sat on the throne (Evans 1900: 42). With the restoration of the relief fresco of a young man, apparently wearing a feathered crown, Evans had soon found an image of the ruler, whom he regarded as a 'priest-king' (Sherratt 2000). For Evans, the Palace of Minos, as he soon called the building, was both the residence of kings and queens and a religious centre.[5]

With the aid of his assistant, Duncan Mackenzie, Evans came to understand the complex stratigraphy of the Kephala Mound on which the palace was located. They realised that the palace was on top of a Neolithic tell, an artificial mound built up over thousands of years of occupation. The Bronze Age levels were distinguished on the basis of changes in architecture and pottery, and divided into a number of periods termed Early, Middle and Late Minoan. Their excavations suggested that in the Early Minoan period the buildings on the summit of the mound came to coalesce around a central courtyard until a palace was formed at the start of the Middle Minoan period. This building was severely damaged by an earthquake towards the end of this period, but was rapidly rebuilt and elaborated. It was finally destroyed by fire during the Late Minoan period, preserving the Linear B tablets that were found in large numbers across the site. Distinctions within periods were charted through changes in pottery styles; each period was divided into three phases and sometimes further subphases. These phases were associated with episodes of destruction and building, dated using the pottery scheme. This tripartite scheme was predicated on evolutionary ideas of birth, florescence and decay. This scheme, promoted by Evans (1906a), was soon adopted by archaeologists across the Aegean and is still in use today (Table 1.1). Although the Neolithic sequence at Knossos was divided in the same way by Evans and Mackenzie, this has been substantially revised as a result of subsequent excavation and study, and in order to integrate it with other Cretan and Aegean sequences (Tomkins 2007: 13–21).

The easing of political tensions on Crete at the very end of the nineteenth century opened the way for the excavation of sites across the island at the same time as Evans was working at Knossos (Figure 1.3). Italian excavations at Phaistos in southern Crete also began in 1900, where Luigi Pernier and Federico Halbherr found another 'palace' like that at Knossos, and another

TABLE 1.1 *Chronological table showing periods and approximate absolute dating*

Cultural Period	Palatial Period	Ceramic Period	Approximate Absolute Dates (BCE)
Neolithic		Initial Neolithic	7000–6500
		Early Neolithic	6500–5900
		Middle Neolithic	5900–5300
		Late Neolithic	5300–4500
		Final Neolithic	4500–3100
Early Minoan (EM)	Prepalatial	EMI	3100–2700
		EMII	2700–2200
		EMIII	2200–2000
Middle Minoan (MM)		MMIA	2000–1900
	Protopalatial	MMIB	1900–1800
		MMII	1800–1700
	Neopalatial	MMIII	1700–1600
		LMIA	1600–1500
		LMIB	1500–1450
Late Minoan (LM)	Final Palatial	LMII	1450–1400
		LMIIIA	1400–1350
	Postpalatial	LMIIIB	1350–1200
		LMIIIC	1200–1050



1.3. Map of Crete showing sites discussed in the text. Circle: settlement; square: palace site; diamond: other palatial centre; star: sanctuary site; (1) Alatzomouri-Pefka; (2) Archanes-Phourni; (3) Armenoi; (4) Atsipadhes; (5) Ayia Triada; (6) Chalinomouri; (7) Chania; (8) Chryssi; (9) Debla; (10) Gournia; (11) Juktas; (12) Kato Syme; (13) Knossos; (14) Kommos; (15) Kophinas; (16) Koumasa; (17) Mallia; (18) Mochlos; (19) Myrtos Fournou Kourifi; (20) Nirou Chani; (21) Palaikastro; (22) Papadiokampos; (23) Petras; (24) Petsophas; (25) Phaistos; (26) Piskokephalo; (27) Poros; (28) Porti; (29) Pseira; (30) Psychro; (31) Traostalos; (32) Tylissos; (33) Vronda/Kastro; (34) Vrysinas; (35) Zakros

substantial building at the nearby site of Ayia Triada two years later (Pernier and Banti 1935, 1951). In keeping with the desire to accommodate such buildings within a scheme of elite European architecture, this became known as a 'villa' (Halbherr 1903: 7). The Cretan Stephanos Xanthoudides worked in the same area, the southern Mesara plain, excavating a number of Early Bronze Age

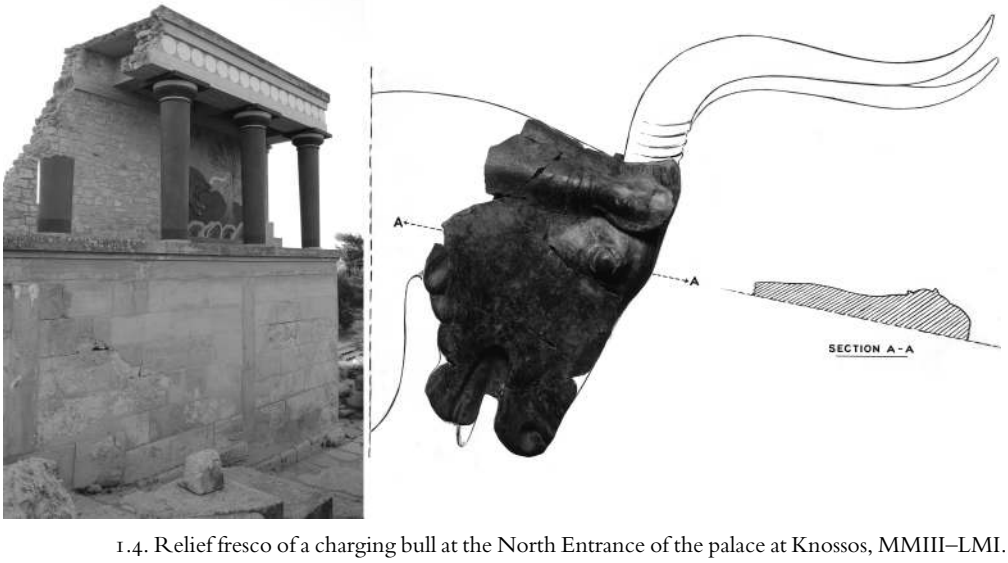
tombs (Xanthoudides 1924). American archaeologists worked in the east of the island; Harriet Boyd Hawes and her assistants, Richard Seager and Edith Hall, between them excavated a number of sites, including the settlement of Gournia, from 1901 (Boyd Hawes et al. 1908). At the same time British archaeologists were exploring further east. Neither Robert Carr Bosanquet at Petras nor David Hogarth at Zakros discovered palaces, although they did find Bronze Age material (Hogarth 1901; Bosanquet 1902b); palaces were subsequently discovered by Greek archaeologists at both sites in the later twentieth century (Platon 1971; Tsipopoulou 2012). Bosanquet (1902a) also excavated at Palaikastro, where a large settlement was uncovered, although, after more than a century, a palace has not yet been found. In 1915 another palace was found at Mallia, on the north coast of Crete to the east of Knossos, by Joseph Hazzidakis, and subsequently excavated by French archaeologists (Hazzidakis 1915; Chapouthier and Charbonneaux 1928).

Although Hazzidakis and Halbherr had been exploring sites on Crete during the period of Ottoman control, the burst of excavation at the start of the twentieth century meant that these archaeologists of various nationalities were simultaneously excavating Bronze Age sites. They informed one another of their discoveries and noted similarities in architecture and pottery as they were trying to understand their sites. What emerged was an idea that these sites were all essentially part of the same culture, and the term 'Minoan' came to be used to describe all of them. This was the period in which Minoan Crete came into being and, as another excavator remarked 100 years later, 'it is still the case that all modern research derives from, even if it is at times in antithesis to, the way the discoveries at the big sites were formulated in the first heady years of Cretan freedom in the early twentieth century' (Cadogan 2000: 17). It is no accident that the way in which Minoan Crete was established as a European civilisation, with affinities to prehistoric Greece, aligned closely with the cause of Cretan freedom, and its subsequent union with Greece in 1913. The modernist vision of the Cretan past resulted from a collaboration between Western European and American archaeologists and the local scholars, led by Hazzidakis and Xanthoudides, who encouraged them to excavate across the island (Carabott 2006; Varouchakis 2017). Since many of the still-dominant theories and interpretations of Minoan Crete are derived from this period, examining their origins provides a basis for evaluating them.

Whereas other archaeologists published site reports, Arthur Evans chose to follow his preliminary reports of his excavations at Knossos with an altogether different type of publication. *The Palace of Minos at Knossos* appeared in four volumes between 1921 and 1935 and set out Evans's vision of Minoan Crete intertwined with the results of his excavations. It opens with a claim that the Greek myth of Theseus and the Minotaur is unfair to 'this early civilisation of Crete'. Evans's excavations had shown that: 'The ogre's den turns out to be

a peaceful abode of priest-kings, in some respects more modern in its equipments than anything produced by classical Greece' (Evans 1921b: 1). There has long been a feeling that the sense of modernity at Knossos owes much to Evans rebuilding the site with the help of reinforced concrete, one of the earliest uses of this material (Gere 2009). These 'reconstitutions', as Evans termed them, were often necessary to preserve the remains of the building, particularly on the east side where several storeys were found. And, like Evans's interpretations, these modern additions to the palace cannot simply be dismantled and discarded. More than any other site on Crete the sometimes fanciful concrete reconstructions open a dialogue between the visitor and the Bronze Age (Duke 2007). They are a metaphor for the Minoans, a twentieth-century vision of an ancient civilisation built on the material traces of the Bronze Age.

One of the most striking features of the modern-day palace at Knossos is the replica relief painting of the charging bull in front of an olive tree at the North Entrance (Figure 1.4). Based on fresco fragments recovered from the entrance passage below, this reconstruction was nevertheless an argument cast in concrete. The bull allowed Evans to connect the labyrinthine building he had excavated with the Minotaur of Greek myth by suggesting that this relief had inspired the tale: 'The monumental reliefs within its sea-gate – visible, it would appear, to a much later date – representing bull-catching scenes and, still more, the fresco panels with feats of the bull-ring in which girls as well as youths took part, go far to explain the myth' (Evans 1921b: 1–2). There is no evidence that



1.4. Relief fresco of a charging bull at the North Entrance of the palace at Knossos, MMIII–LMI. Left: photograph. © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports (N. 3028/2002); right: reconstruction drawing based on photograph of surviving fresco fragment (Evans Fresco Drawing P/2 c). © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford